

## **Feeding your baby during coronavirus - including when parent has suspected or confirmed coronavirus COVID-19**

- **CARRY ON BREASTFEEDING**
- **WASH HANDS MORE FREQUENTLY**
- **ASK FOR HELP IF NEEDED**

The following guidance is based on current best knowledge around infant feeding, coronavirus COVID-19 and infant feeding during emergencies. This is being closely monitored and updated daily.

Follow current [NHS 111 online](#) advice for coronavirus.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please see the latest information from the RCOG: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/>

### **Pregnancy, preparing to feed your baby**

Your midwife, health visitor and other healthcare professionals are available to offer support and information. If you are pregnant, you can learn more about breastfeeding before baby is born, this will help establish comfortable feeding and milk supply when baby is born. There are good resources including informative videos on Newham Council's website '[Getting ready for your baby](#)' section.

### **Breastfeeding**

#### **Carry on breastfeeding.**

At the moment there is no evidence that the virus can be carried in breastmilk, so it's agreed that the well-recognised benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of coronavirus through breastmilk.

Mothers make antibodies and protective factors that will be passed on to their babies via their milk, usually within 4 hrs. This needs to be part of any discussion with mothers re their method of feeding for both infected and uninfected mothers. This protection will not exist if babies are formula fed.

Remember it is more likely mothers with symptoms will have an ordinary cold or flu.

Stopping breastfeeding is not recommended as this will increase the risk of mastitis for the mother, and infections for baby and can be a difficult and stressful process at an already stressful time. Mothers will need more information about mastitis and safe responsive bottle feeding if stopping breastfeeding is their informed choice.

For mothers who are unwell, as with colds and flu, two paracetamol four times a day or 400 milligrams ibuprofen three times a day is safe when breastfeeding. Oral decongestants should be avoided by breastfeeding mothers as they can dramatically reduce milk supply

e.g.; Lemsip, Sudafed, Beechams, Day Nurse and Night Nurse. Decongestant nasal sprays are safe and effective but should not be used more than 7 days eg; Otrivine, Sudafed. Steam inhalation may be helpful. Always check with pharmacist and further information on cough and cold remedies is online Breastfeeding Network [here](#)

The main risk of breastfeeding during coronavirus is close contact between you and your baby, as you may share infective airborne droplets, leading to infection of the baby after birth.

A discussion about the risks and benefits of breastfeeding should take place between you and your family and your maternity team.

This guidance may change as knowledge evolves.

If you choose to breastfeed your baby, the following precautions are recommended:

- Wash your hands before touching your baby, breast pump or bottles
- Try to avoid coughing or sneezing on your baby
- Consider wearing a face mask while holding your baby close i.e. whilst breastfeeding, if available
- Follow NHS guidance for bottle and pump cleaning and sterilisation
- Consider asking someone who is well to feed expressed breast milk to your baby.

### **Mixed Feeding**

If you are mixed feeding (combination of breast and formula). Breastmilk produces antibodies to the virus. Speak to your health visitor for practical information to support you to increase and protect your milk supply, this will also reduce any need for infant formula. You will find useful information on increasing milk supply in our section online '[Feeding your baby](#)'

### **Bottle feeding**

If you are using infant formula, there is no need to buy extra stock. The UK supermarket supply chain is working efficiently, restocking daily in most cases. Remember that you don't need to buy expensive brands. Any brand, including supermarket own brand is just as safe and nutritious for your baby more information on the types of formula can be found on [our website](#). The recommendation is \***first stage**\* infant formula until 12 months. For safe cleaning and sterilising information please see '[Feeding your baby](#)' links below.

Caring for a baby involves frequent, close and intimate contact with your little one. Whilst we learn more about this new disease, all guidance is based on changing information. The benefit of close loving relationships between parents and babies is well understood, for baby's brain development as well as their emotional well-being. However, if you have confirmed or suspected coronavirus, you may wish to consider how you can best minimise the risk of transmission to your baby.

### **Online infant feeding support**

To complement the support from your health visitor, the '[Feeding your baby](#)' section of [Newham Council's 0-19 Children's Health website](#), has helpful videos on position and attachment, expressing, increasing milk supply and common problems such as sore nipples, as well as reliable information on responsive, paced bottle feeding, choosing infant formulas, and introduction of solid foods. The Unicef BFI guides to breastfeeding and bottle feeding in other languages (including: Bengali, Urdu, Mandarin, Polish, Romanian) are also here:

<https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/advice.page?id=91Bv7qGMZ1g>

Contact Newham Health Visiting:  
 healthvisiting@newham.gov.uk  
 020 3373 9983

COVID-19 Virus Infection and Pregnancy; Information for pregnant women and their families Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is [here](#)

NHS 11 online Coronavirus (COVID-19) is [here](#)

\*Voluntary support is available from:

Voluntary Organisation websites	Open	Helpline
<a href="#">National Childbirth Trust (NCT)</a>	8am - 12pm	0300 330 0700
<a href="#">La Leche League GB (LLL)</a>	24 hours daily	0845 120 2918
<a href="#">Breastfeeding Network (BfN)</a>	9.30am - 9.30pm	0300 100 0210
<a href="#">Association of Breastfeeding Mothers</a>	9.30am - 10.30pm	0300 330 5453
<a href="#">National breastfeeding helpline</a>	9.30am - 9.30pm	0300 100 0212

Hazel Jones  
 Infant Feeding Co-ordinator  
 Children and Young Peoples Services  
 London Borough of Newham  
[Hazel.jones@newham.gov.uk](mailto:Hazel.jones@newham.gov.uk)  
 M: 07825 715565